DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 096 979 IR 001 160

AUTHOR	Bertram, Charles L.
TITLE	Description of Procedures Used to Indicate the Need for a Preschool Television Program.
INSTITUTION	Appalachia Educational Lab., Charleston, W. Va.
PUB DATE	15 Apr 74
NOTE	9p.; Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Conference (Chicago, Illinois, April 15-19, 1974)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	*Preschool Children; *Programing (Broadcast); *Program Proposals; Speeches
IDENTIFIERS	Appalachia Educational Laboratory

ABSTRACT

A study was made to: (1) describe a series of procedures designed to assess the need for a new preschool television series; (2) achieve consensual validation of the procedures to be used in the series of studies; and (3) discuss the management procedures and organizational problems involved in the completion of the studies. The general methods used for the needs and capability documentation were: (1) to review appropriate literature; (2) to develop criteria for a preschool television program; (3) to measure the reaction of children to different television programs; and (4) to get reactions based on the criteria to the proposed program from the various consumer groups. Initially, there was difficulty in obtaining consensus concerning the primary focus of the studies. Nevertheless, the studies concluded that: (1) a preschool television series was needed and that the Appalachia Educational Laboratory was capable of developing such a series; (2) many of the procedures, such as the measuring of children's interest in television programs, were very effective; (3) other procedures, such as attempts to measure consumer groups' reactions to children's television programs, were not only effective, but also yielded benefits of a diffusion nature beyond those of singularly assessing product effectiveness. (WCM)

Session 14.13

ED 096979

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES USED TO INDICATE THE NEED FOR A PRESCHOOL TELEVISION PROGRAM

Charles L. Bertram

Research and Evaluation Division
Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc.
Charleston, West Virginia 25325

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

A paper presented at the Annual Meeting
of the
American Educational Research Association
Chicago, Illinois

April 15-19, 1974

IR 001 160

Description of Procedures Used to Indicate the Need for a Preschool Television Series

Effective December 1, 1972, the Appalachia Educational Laboratory was commissioned by the director of the National Institute of Education to "document the need for and capability of (AEL's) development of a television program". If evaluated positively by the NIE review panels, the documentation could lead to development of a Home-Oriented Preschool Education program (HOPE), which would include a television series and an expected funding level of roughly six million dollars for a four-year development effort.

Of central importance to the program was that a new television series should be developed for the Appalachian Region rather than using Sesame Street, Captain Kangaroo, or some other children's television program.

The series of studies was completed by June 1, 1973. The findings of the studies are of secondary importance to this discussion and can be found in the technical reports given in the attached list of references. Of primary importance are the procedures used, the management strategies employed, the problems encountered, and the general trauma felt by a research division in attempting comparatively fast-paced needs and capability studies.

Objectives for the Presentation

The objectives for this presentation are:

1. To describe a series of procedures designed to assess the need for a new preschool television series.
2. To achieve consensual validation of the procedures used in the series of studies.
3. To discuss the management procedures and organizational problems involved in the completion of the series of studies.

The research discussed in this paper was conducted by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc. pursuant to Contract No. NE-C-00-3-0094 with the National Institute of Education, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the National Institute of Education and no official endorsement by that office should be inferred. The Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc. is an equal opportunity employer.

Assumptions on Which the Studies Were Based

Need was considered to be a value judgment of the intended clientele for a program and, other than the children themselves, the sources for indication of a needed preschool television program were:

1. Representatives of academic disciplines, such as early childhood education, child psychology, and research.
2. Representatives of regulatory and service institutions including state education agencies, local school systems, and certain federal agencies.
3. Television specialists primarily associated with children's television programs.
4. Parents of preschool children.

The determination of an educational need was considered to require the following:

1. Provision of information to representatives of the target population (mentioned previously).
2. Designation and implementation of procedures whereby these representatives can react, interact, and achieve consensus.
3. Assessment and documentation of the values associated with proposed concepts, programs, or products.

Methods and Data Source

The general methods used for the needs and capability documentation for the preschool children were (1) to review appropriate literature, (2) to derive and develop criteria for a preschool television program, (3) to measure the reaction of children to different television programs, and (4) to get reactions based on the criteria, to the proposed program from the various consumer groups.

An extensive literature review was directed toward explicating the preschool needs of children and describing a theoretical base on which the entire HOPE system is based. The works of Skinner (1966), Butler (1971), Woolman (1971), Coleman (1966), Gordon (1969), and others were used in formulating a theoretical base. In addition, selected demographic and marketing data were assembled for use by the consumer representatives. The Television Factbook (Warren, 1972), and U. S. census data (1972) were primary sources of demographic and marketing data. These data were systematically collected and used to give representatives of the consumer groups an indication of basic needs of preschool children.

The representatives of the consumer groups were convened to assist the AEL staff with formulating criteria for a preschool television series according to a process similar to one advocated by the UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation (Klein, 1971). Specialists in preschool education and children's television, including Robert (Captain Kangaroo) Keeshan, Rose Mukerji, Martha Rashid, Herbert Sprigle, Don Hamachek, and Eugene Wenger, were convened as representatives of academic interests in preschool education. Representatives from seven State Education Agencies were also convened as a separate panel. Through face-to-face group interaction, some fifty-seven suggestions for requirements of a preschool television series emerged. These were recorded, synthesized, and categorized into a list of nine statements of criteria. The criteria were submitted to the different groups to obtain consensus among them and certain changes in the criteria were based on their recommendations.

Currently available children's television programs, such as Captain Kangaroo and Sesame Street, were shown to children of ages three, four, and five. The percent of attention and number of overt responses to various taped segments were systematically recorded and analyzed by procedures similar to those used by Reeves (1970) and Sproul (1973). Two demonstration tapes representative of

the proposed series were produced by AEL, and similar data were collected from the children as they observed the new tapes. The rate of attention to different types of tape segments, such as monologue or puppetry, was presented as graphic profiles in order to permit visual comparisons of demonstration tape results with those of the commercial programs.

In order to assess the capability of the Laboratory to produce a new television series and as further indication of the need for a series, representatives of various consumer groups were asked to rate the demonstration tapes according to the nine criteria previously established. The consumer groups were the previously mentioned academic representatives and early childhood specialists representing the State Education Agencies in the Appalachian Region. Also, representatives of commercial television and representatives of educational television broadcasters were requested to assess the tapes.

The different reviews and assessments were combined into a summary document and ten supporting technical reports (see attached list) according to a production schedule established near the beginning of the project. These reports were presented, both physically and verbally, to an NIE review panel convened by that agency for the purpose of making recommendations concerning funding.

The six-member NIE review panel completed their evaluation of the series of studies along with other aspects of the program and reported both verbally and in writing to NIE staff. The NIE staff members who summarized the reactions of the review panel gave the series of studies a mixed report. On the positive side, the NIE review panel was reported to feel that the "need for educational support was...evident, and no existing television program would conceivably serve in the place of the new (television) series". They further stated that the "underlying concept was good, but needed a more thorough and complete

exposition", although eleven reports requiring 347 pages of narrative, graphs, and tables were produced by four professional staff members within six months. Other negative comments were that the needs study statement "was felt to be generally inadequate in that it did not fully indicate how the curriculum fits the characteristics of the family, nor was there a thoughtful analysis of the educational needs of the area, the needs of the children, or of the way children develop". A continuation in funding was recommended, but less than the level anticipated by the Laboratory staff.

Results and Conclusions

A major report with ten supporting technical reports was produced and transmitted to the appropriate agency within a designated period of six months. In retrospect, the most serious problem with the studies was the gross discrepancy between the Laboratory staff's understanding of the expectations of the funding agent and the review panel's expectations which emerged during the "site" reviews. The Laboratory position was that previous review panels had examined the HOPE concept and field test results, and that the purpose of the present needs studies was only to demonstrate the requirement for a new children's television series which would become a part of the preschool program. The report from the review panel indicated that the need for a new television series was effectively demonstrated.

Effective input was received from all the listed consumer groups except from parents. The attempt to measure the reaction of parents was aborted because of a low percentage return from hand delivered questionnaires, and because there was not time to find some alternative procedure for obtaining parents' reactions.

Several other problems were encountered during the conduct of the studies. Initially, there was some difficulty with obtaining consensus concerning the

design of the studies. Some Laboratory staff preferred a cost benefit analysis, while others envisioned production of a public relations-type document. An even more serious problem was difficulty in obtaining consensus concerning the primary focus of the studies. For example, should the focus of the studies be on only a television series or on the entire Home-Oriented Preschool Education system of preschool education? There was also considerable difficulty obtaining consensus on a specific definition of the population. Was it all Appalachian children or rural Appalachian children?

Another concern was difficulty with finding an appropriate balance between the diffuser's tendency to overstate results and the researcher's tendency to understate findings.

The conclusion of the studies was that a preschool television series was needed and that the Laboratory was capable of developing such a series. The conclusion from conducting the studies was that many of the procedures, such as the measuring of children's interest in television programs, were very effective. The use of other procedures, such as attempts to measure parents' reactions to television programs, was not effective. Some procedures, such as attempts to measure consumer groups' reactions to children's television programs, were not only effective from a pure evaluation point of view, but also yielded benefits of a diffusion nature beyond those of singularly assessing product effectiveness.

References

Bureau of the Census. 1970 Census of Population, General Social and Economic Characteristics: United States Summary. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, 1972, pp. 386-7.

Butler, Annie. Literature Search and Development of an Evaluation System in Early Childhood Education: Research Characteristics of Preschool Children. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University, 1971. ED 059 780

Coleman, James, et al. Equality of Educational Opportunity. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1966.

Gordon, Ira J. "Developing Parent Power," Edith Grotberg (Ed.). Critical Issues in Research Related to Disadvantaged Children. Princeton, New Jersey: Educational Testing Service, 1969.

Klein, Stephen P. Evaluation Workshop I: An Orientation. Monterey Park, California: CTB/McGraw-Hill. 1971.

Reeves, B. The First Year of Sesame Street, The Formative Research, Final Report. New York: Children's Television Workshop, 1970.

Skinner, B. F. "What is the Experimental Analysis of Behavior", Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior, (1966), 9(3):215-216.

Sproul, Natalie. "Visual Attention, Modeling Behaviors, and Other Verbal and Nonverbal Meta-Communication of Prekindergarten Children Viewing Sesame Street", American Educational Research Journal, Spring, 1973, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 101-114.

Warren, Albert. Television Factbook. Washington, D. C.: Television Digest, Inc., 1972, passim.

Woolman, Myron and Edith H. Grotberg. Educational Designs and Proposal for Early Childhood Research: A New Look: A Systems Approach to Pre-School Education. Washington, D. C.: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Office of Economic Opportunity, 1971. ED 053 809

HOPE Needs and Capability Study References

Appalachia Needs HOPE: The Need for and Capability of the Appalachia Educational Laboratory to Develop a New Preschool Television Program. Charleston, W. Va.: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc., May, 1973. (Authors: Charles Bertram, Benjamin Bailey, Brainard Hines, Joe Shively, and Ermel Stepp) (ERIC No. to be assigned)

Marketable Preschool Education Program Theoretical Base and Needs. Technical Report No. 24. Charleston, W. Va.: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc., May, 1973. (Author: Ermel Stepp)

Preschool Education Programs: An Analytical Comparison. Technical Report No. 25. Charleston, W. Va.: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc., May, 1973. (Author: Benjamin Bailey) (ERIC No. to be assigned)

Demographic and Marketing Data for the Marketable Preschool Education Program. Technical Report No. 26. Charleston, W. Va.: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc., May, 1973. (Author: Ermel Stepp) (ERIC No. to be assigned)

Selection of Criteria for the Home-Oriented Preschool Education Television Series. Technical Report No. 27. Charleston, W. Va.: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc., May, 1973. (Author: Charles Bertram) (ERIC No. to be assigned)

Children's Reactions to Types of Television Presentation. Technical Report No. 28. Charleston, W. Va.: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc., May, 1973. (Author: Brainard Hines) (ERIC No. to be assigned)

Commercial Television Personnel's Review of the Technical Quality and Marketability of AEL's "Around the Bend" Pilot Tapes. Technical Report No. 29. Charleston, W. Va.: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc., May, 1973. (Author: Joe Shively) (ERIC No. to be assigned)

State Department Early Childhood Education Program Specialists' Review of the Content and Technical Quality of AEL's "Around the Bend" Pilot Tapes. Technical Report No. 30. Charleston, W. Va.: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc., May, 1973. (Author: Joe Shively) (ERIC No. to be assigned)

Educational Television Personnel's Review of the Technical Quality, Content Criteria, and Marketability of AEL's "Around the Bend" Pilot Tapes Technical Report No. 31. Charleston, W. Va.: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc., June, 1973. (Author: Joe Shively) (ERIC No. to be assigned)

Marketable Preschool Education Program Evaluation Plan. Technical Report No. 33. Charleston, W. Va.: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc., May, 1973. (Author: Joe Shively) (ERIC No. to be assigned)

Children's Reactions to Segments of a Children's Television Series. Technical Report No. 34. Charleston, W. Va.: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc., June, 1973. (Authors: Dick Cagno and Joe Shively) (ERIC No. to be assigned)